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STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOLS

CHARLESTON

1916

Evening Classes

FOR

West Virginia Elementary Schools

Containing Information and Suggestions on the Organization of
Evening Classes in Rural, Village and Town Schools

Prepared by

L. J. HANIFAN

State Supervisor of Rural Schools

Under the Direction of

M. P. SHAWKEY

State Superintendent of Schools

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EVENING CLASSES

A Nation-wide Campaign

For a number of years the principal cities throughout the country have maintained night schools, or evening classes, as a legitimate part of their respective school systems. It is only recently that evening classes have been offered among rural, village and town schools. The Kentucky "moonlight" school is perhaps the most notable example of this phase of our rural school work. But recently a number of other states have undertaken to provide evening classes for rural communities. Doctor P. P. Claxton, United States Commissioner of Education, has lately inaugurated a nationwide campaign for the extension of evening classes throughout the whole country.

What West Virginia Has Done

For the past twenty-five years individual teachers of West Virginia have conducted evening classes. The number in any one year has not been large. Nobody said much about the work. There are no written records of the work. And yet older persons here and there will tell you about the night schools of fifteen to twenty-five years ago.

But last year, 1915-16, a definite movement was started for the organization of evening classes among rural, village and town schools. Available reports show that there were 150 to 200 such night schools in the state. This was strictly a voluntary movement and so far as I know the teachers of these night schools did this work with no remuneration except the good will of those whom they taught. These teachers deserve the highest praise that may be given them. We hope that a great many more teachers will join this roll of honor for the year 1916-17.

Notable Examples

Two of the most successful night schools that came under my observation the past year were found in Church district, Wetzel County,—one at the Carney school with an enrollment of 30, and the other at the Rock Camp school with an enrollment of 53—both of which are one-room country schools. In these schools the English subjects, (reading, spelling, writing), arithmetic, civics and agriculture were taught. But the teachers aimed to meet the needs of the people just as nearly as was possible. In connection with arithmetic practical bookkeeping or farm accounting was taught. In agriculture, potato culture, feeding of live stock, corn growing, and elementary facts about dairying were emphasized because the people of that district were most interested in these very things. I was at one of these night schools one evening when the county agricultural agent tested the milk of a number of cows in the community. The farmers brought their samples and took the keenest interest in this work. At one of these schools also a class in domestic science was organized among the mothers and older girls.

A very successful night school for foreigners has for two years been conducted at Minden, Fayette County, by Mr. Geo. W. Biggs, principal of the Minden school. The experience of Mr. Biggs shows conclusively that if properly approached and rightly treated, a very large proportion of our foreign population will take advantage of evening classes wherever they are offered.

The "Centralized" Night School

Teachers have found it best to maintain evening classes in country districts only at the most central points. Let the evening classes be offered then at the most central school house among a group of three or four schools. The teachers of the whole group join their forces at this central point. One may teach arithmetic and farm accounting, while another will teach the agricultural subjects. Such an arrangement is advantageous for two reasons; first, because it enlarges the area of the community and becomes in effect a larger community center; secondly, because it makes possible the offering of more subjects well taught than one teacher could do alone. No doubt in time boards of education will select and place their teachers with reference to such a scheme as this. In due time I think we shall come to the place where such a group of country school teachers will be selected somewhat with reference to their ability to teach some special subject, agriculture, say, in the central

evening school. We should then have the same kind of specialization that the high schools now enjoy. Furthermore, the central night school will have a tendency to bring about the centralization of the day schools.

Not a School for Illiterates Only

The West Virginia night school is not intended to be a school merely for the purpose of teaching illiterate adults to read and write. Our people are sensitive on this point. The word "illiterate" should in no case be applied to persons who are unable to read and write. Simply announce the night school for all who care to attend. Those who cannot read and write will enter the English classes and begin their work at the bottom. In this way, no one need be embarrassed. To speak of them as illiterates will simply keep them away.

How to Begin

It will be necessary to do some preliminary work before undertaking to organize a night school. Some of the leading citizens of the community should be made acquainted with the teacher's purpose and their co-operation should be sought. The teacher should also quietly make a survey of her community to determine approximately the number of persons that may be interested in the night school. When all plans for the work have been made, the teacher may then announce through the children and through those who are interested in helping her with the work that on a given evening the work will begin. She should see to it that all who are expected to enroll are advised of the opening of the school. It will be necessary to follow up the work closely by soliciting "scholars" to join the classes; for some will wait until they see whether the undertaking is a "go". If there is a parent-teachers' association or other organization in the community, their assistance should be sought.

The Course of Study

The work of the night school should be adapted to the actual needs of the people concerned. Local conditions must be considered. The night school is of the nature of vocation schools. For in most cases the students study the subjects of most interest to them from the standpoint of their ways of making a living. The English subjects, (reading, spelling and writing), the agricultural subjects,

arithmetic and civics will constitute the course of study in most night schools. The students will usually fall into these groups. But where it is possible to do so, teachers should try to offer individual instruction in exceptional cases. For example, last year at the Carney school, Wetzel County, a farmer came to the school and wished to enroll if he could learn how to feed and care for his cattle during the winter months. Instruction of that kind was offered and later three other farmers joined him.

Some Opportunities for Evening Classes

1. The Elimination of Illiteracy—the U. S. Census reports of 1910 show that there were in West Virginia at that time 903,822 persons who were 10 years of age or over. Of that number 74,866 or 8.3 per cent. were unable to read and write. These reports show also that of the 338,349 males of voting age, 21 years, 35,040 or 10.4 per cent. were unable to read and write. They show also that of the 280,504 persons 10 to 20 years of age, 11,367 or 4.1 per cent. were classed as illiterates.

These figures point out the opportunity of the night school as a means of eliminating, or reducing, the rate of illiteracy in West Virginia. We do not think of this work as a matter solely of state pride. The important thing is that these persons who are classed as illiterates have been unfortunate enough not to acquire this minimum of learning when they were of school age. It may have been their fault and it may not have been their fault. At any rate a great many of these persons are now up against the proposition of making a living and of filling their places as members and citizens of their communities. They see now, if they did not see earlier, that they are handicapped on every hand by not knowing how to read and write the English language. While we may not attach as great importance to the elimination of illiteracy as some of the other states do, yet we are extremely anxious that any who desire to learn to read and write, or who can without embarrassment, be led to desire to learn to read and write, should have an opportunity to do so.

2. Teaching Foreigners the English Language and American Citizenship—The teachers whose work is in the industrial districts of the state will readily understand the importance of night schools as a means of making good citizens of those who have come to us from foreign lands. A good many of these foreigners desire to become American citizens. All such persons desire to know the

meaning of American citizenship as well as to have a knowledge of the English language. All of these foreign families desire to learn the English language. Teachers may get help in organizing evening classes among foreigners by writing the United States Bureau of Education, Washington, D. C., and North American Civic League for Immigrants, Boston, Mass. The *Promised Land* by Mary Antin, published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, is one of the very best books which one may read for the purpose of getting the point of view and the impressions of the the foreigners who come to America seeking a home and a comfortable fortune.

3. Continuation Classes—In almost every community there are persons who know how to read and write and who may even have completed most of the common school subjects, but who now desire to continue their study as a means either of self-improvement or of vocational training. There are so many of our people who have received just the barest smattering of the common school subjects. They can read a little, write a little, and figure a little, but can do none of these very well. Then there are a lot of men who can manage to read and write fairly well but who do not understand the mathematical calculations necessary for them to carry on their daily work. Nor do they know how to keep their accounts, however small they may be. In agricultural communities there are a good many farmers who desire to study agriculture and farm accounting. Among the people just enumerated there is a fair field for the night schools. They are people who for one reason or another failed to take advantage of the schools when they were of school age. Now they see the need of a little more education. And they understand the particular kind of knowledge which they need in their daily lives. Hence they want the most practical kind of instruction.

4. Cultural Subjects—In some communities there may be found groups of persons who desire to study history, English literature or some other subject for the purpose of self-culture. The teacher will, of course, encourage such groups in every possible way and help all that he can. This kind of work could perhaps be carried on best as reading circle work. Under this head may come the Farmers' Clubs which are being widely extended under the direction and encouragement of the county agricultural agents.

Illiteracy in West Virginia

List of counties showing rate of illiteracy for persons ten years of age and over and the rank each has for low rate of illiteracy :

RANK	COUNTY	PER CENT.
1	Brooke.....	2.5
2	Wood.....	2.6
3	Ohio.....	3.1
4	Monongalia.....	4.6
5	Ritchie.....	4.7
6	Tyler.....	4.9
7	Nicholas.....	5.3
8	Hampshire, Lewis, Monroe.....	5.4
9	Berkeley, Jackson, Marshall, Morgan, Preston.....	5.5
10	Upshur, Wirt.....	5.6
11	Hancock.....	6.2
12	Roane.....	6.4
13	Cabell, Mineral, Taylor.....	6.5
14	Pleasants.....	6.6
15	Mason.....	6.7
16	Barbour, Doddridge.....	6.9
17	Summers.....	7.1
18	Pocahontas.....	7.4
19	Greenbrier, Jefferson, Marion.....	7.7
20	Calhoun, Harrison.....	7.8
21	Wetzel.....	8.0
22	Randolph.....	8.1
23	Braxton, Webster.....	8.5
24	Gilmer.....	8.7
25	Hardy.....	9.0
26	Boone.....	9.2
27	Kanawha.....	9.7
28	Pendleton.....	9.9
29	Mercer.....	10.0
30	Putnam.....	10.1
31	Raleigh.....	10.4
32	Wayne.....	10.9
33	Fayette, Tucker.....	11.7
34	Wyoming.....	12.3
35	Grant.....	14.3
36	Clay, Lincoln.....	15.6
37	Logan.....	18.1

38	Mingo.....	19.6
39	McDowell.....	20.2
	State.....	8.3

List of counties showing rate of illiteracy for persons between the ages of ten and twenty and the rank each county holds for low rate of illiteracy.

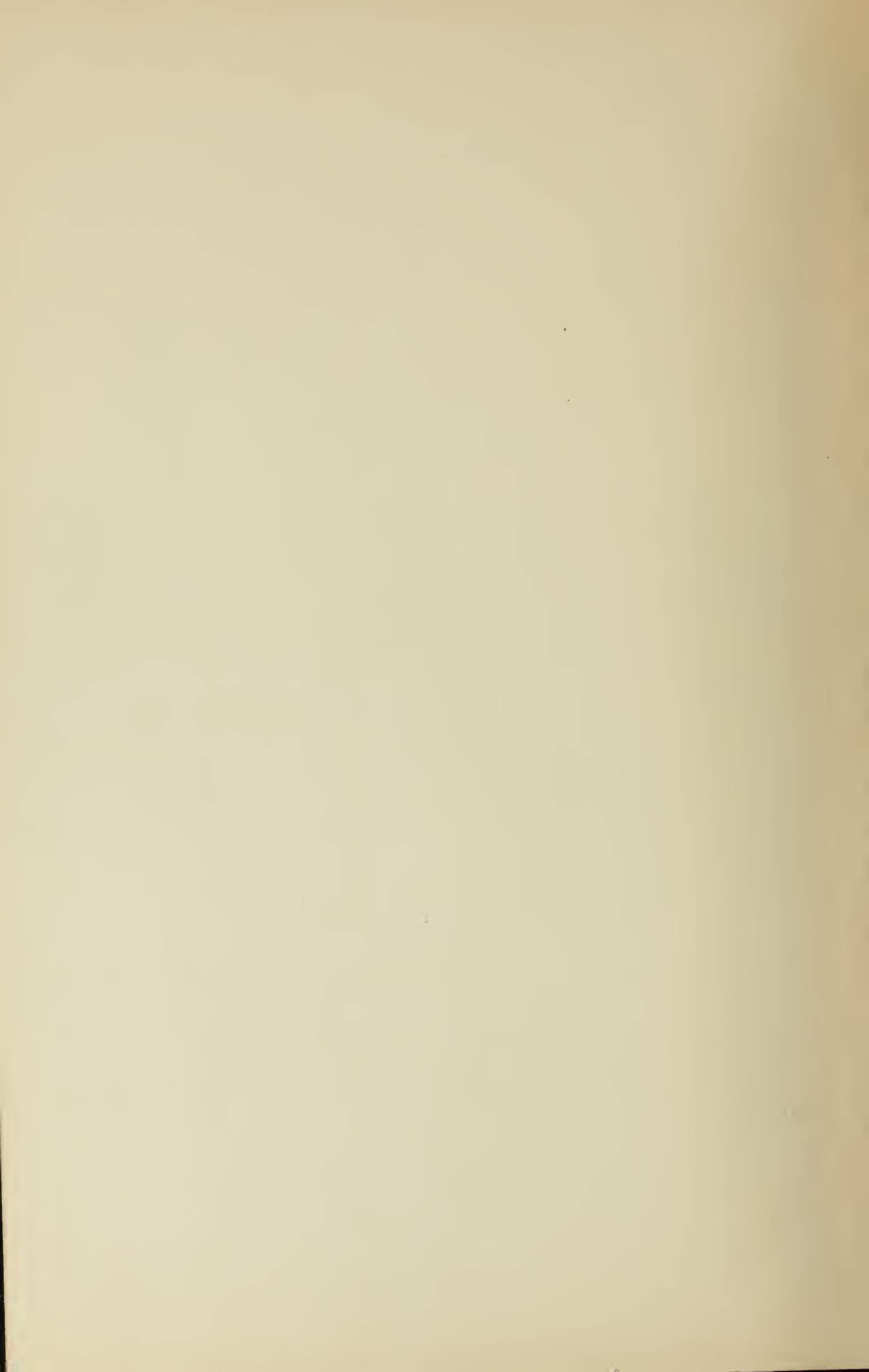
RANK	COUNTY	PER CENT.
1	Wood.....	.8
2	Brooke.....	.9
3	Ohio.....	1.0
4	Taylor, Tyler.....	1.6
5	Marshall, Monongalia, Upshur.....	1.7
6	Ritchie.....	1.9
7	Lewis, Monroe.....	2.0
8	Preston, Roane, Wirt.....	2.1
9	Hancock.....	2.3
10	Jackson, Mason.....	2.4
11	Hampshire.....	2.5
12	Doddridge, Pleasants.....	2.6
13	Barbour, Wetzel.....	2.9
14	Cabell, Morgan.....	3.1
15	Nicholas, Webster.....	3.2
16	Marion.....	3.3
17	Mineral.....	3.4
18	Berkeley, Calhoun, Greenbrier.....	3.5
19	Gilmer, Harrison, Jefferson, Summers.....	3.6
20	Boone, Braxton.....	4.0
21	Mercer.....	4.1
22	Pocahontas.....	4.4
23	Pendleton.....	4.9
24	Randolph.....	5.0
25	Kanawha, Putnam.....	5.1
26	Wayne.....	5.2
27	Fayette.....	5.4
28	Hardy.....	5.6
29	Tucker.....	5.8
30	Raleigh.....	6.2
31	Wyoming.....	6.4
32	Grant.....	6.7
33	Lincoln.....	8.2
34	Clay.....	8.6

35	Logan.....	10.4
36	McDowell.....	12.9
37	Mingo.....	13.3
	State.....	4.1



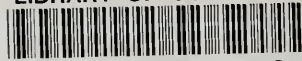








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